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Law and War in the Virtual Era

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Unmanned aerial vehicles and other remotely controlled or “virtual” military technologies are refashioning the conduct of military operations, the functioning of military institutions, and even the objectives of war itself. Virtual technologies are unexpectedly and ironically giving unprecedented traction, transparency, and relevance to venerable *jus in bello* principles protecting civilians from the effects of hostilities, and are forcing states to confront revitalized and new duties to avoid causing harm to civilian populations.

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Although human rights are among the defining purposes of the United Nations and apply to all its staff, recent intergovernmental debates on UN development operations have downplayed human rights, generating both confusion over the actual related duties of UN workers and political controversy. This response analyzes the roles and responsibilities of UN development workers under international human rights law, taking into account the overarching political context as well as the practical realities on the ground.

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